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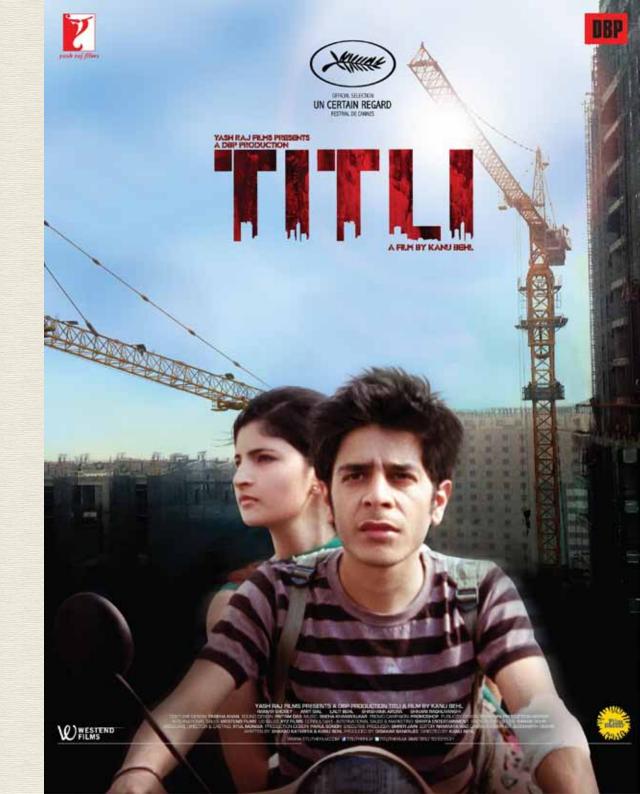
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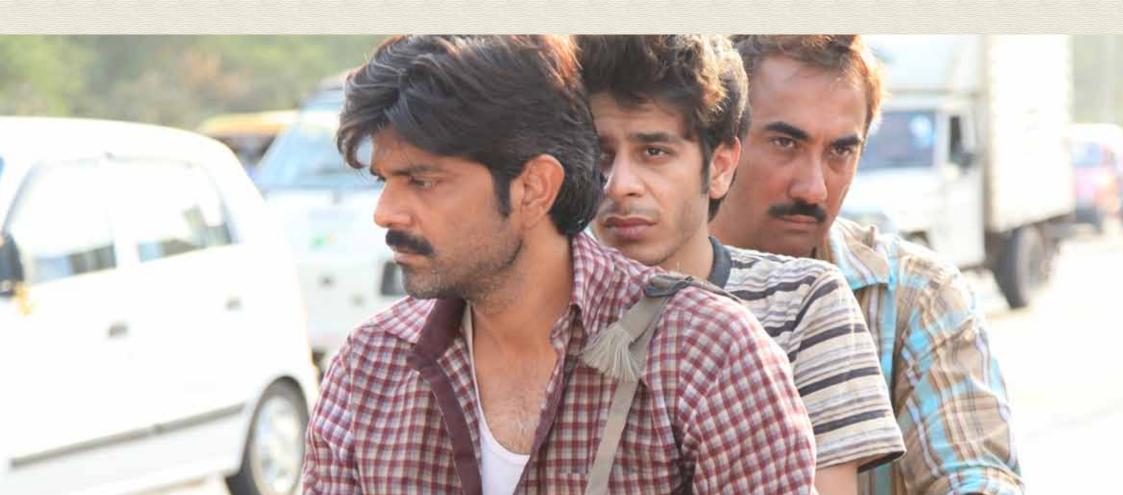




SYNOPSIS

In the badlands of Delhi's underbelly, Titli, the youngest member of a violent car-jacking brotherhood, plots a desperate bid to escape the 'family' business. His schemes are thwarted by his unruly brothers, who marry him off against his will. But Titli finds an unlikely ally in his new wife, Neelu, who nurtures her own frustrated dreams. They form a strange, mutually exploitative pact to break the stranglehold of their family roots. But is escape the same as freedom?

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Most first films are said to be very personal. So how's Titli personal to you?

The core of the film comes from an extremely personal experience. I had a very difficult relationship with my father, growing up. Like a lot of young men in India, I was always trying to escape this really heavy oppressive presence in the house, so I started exploring myself, I left home, I did my own thing. Then I eventually went to film school and in the subsequent years, I realized the more I was obsessing over wanting to be someone else other than my father, the deeper I was becoming exactly like him in different ways, and gradually it turned to being oppressive towards someone else. Titli was three very different films. The film was really close to being made. I almost got commissioned by a really big studio, I was told 'your cheque is ready, go ahead and sign and start production'. I ran away. By the time I got down to the third draft, I knew that the question was: 'Where does the root of this whole problem lie? I want to escape an oppressor, but I am like him.' That's where the final film takes you, generating that spirit inside you, to break the circle. I don't know what happens to the characters in the film, after the film ends, I am not sure whether they'll be able to get out of that circle. But I think by the end of the film, they at least want to do it.



Do you identify with Titli?

I think I identify with all the three men. I think I was Titli, hopefully I am not Titli anymore! I think I feared turning into Vikram, which all Indian men usually turn into: the elder brother, who feels wronged, who's already gotten something that has been passed on to him by the previous generation, who's dealing with a lot of loss, who's trying to compensate for that loss, and better it, but within that, is constantly lamenting for what has not been given to him.

How did you come to films? You're a writer, you've also assisted Dibakar Banerjee, and you studied at the Satyajit Ray Film Institute. Is it a childhood passion?

I come from a typical middle-class Delhi family...

Not the typical Titli family...

No, not quite, no [laughs]. But I've seen that world very intimately because my father started out from somewhere in that world although not specifically from the crime world. Fortunately, they shielded me, and I got a good education. The only different thing was my father was an actor, and he turned later to directing because he got frustrated, because he was not getting good parts for himself. My mother is a writer/actor herself, so I grew up in a film environment. I remember going to one of those very small single-screen theaters, back then, and just staring at the screen and saying, 'what is happening, this is so magical'... As I grew older, I realized that what I really enjoyed was telling stories and re-acquainted myself with cinema. From then on, I was just constantly working towards my one goal, which was to go to film school. There's only FTII [Film and Television in Pune] and SRFTI [Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute in Calcutta], so finally I got in SRFTI in 2003. The great thing that happened to me in film school was I discovered documentaries and it was like falling in love all over again with cinema. Because the idea of documentary in India was very different and it had very limited exposure. But fortunately there was a beautiful doc movement starting out in Calcutta, which is one of the avant-garde cinema centers anyway in India. I made three or four docs very quickly; I made films for NHK, ZBF-Arte... Those three-four years have helped the whole experience of this first film, whether it's handling actors, choosing the way I want the camera to be playing around my actors... Then I joined Dibakar [Banerjee, 2008], then writing LSD [Dibakar Banerjee, 2010] with him, then being around when Shanghai [Dibakar Banerjee, 2012] was being made, I think those helped me most in finding my voice and knowing that cinema was just about lifting the curtains in your own head, and not hiding from yourself, and being as honest as you could with yourself.



You were saying that you discovered the cinema that you really love when you were sixteen. What is the cinema that you love, and how does Titli correspond to this cinema?

When I reconnected with cinema, in my teens, I was not watching a lot of international cinema. I was just watching what was really new in Bollywood. I was not even watching regional cinema. I would have been watching a Satya [Ram Gopal Varma, 1998]. Or a Maqbool [Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003]. I was saying, 'damn, those are really good films, why are they making so few of them? Let me go and let me help in making some more of them.' Just before film school I discovered some international cinema, I discovered Kieslowski and I fell head over heels for his films. Then in film school, the biggest influences for me would have been Emir Kusturica, Kubrick, Kiarostami. And from the contemporaries, I really love Jacques Audiard and Steve McQueen...

Those are very different kinds of filmmakers...

Just a few days back, I was saying: 'I don't think I want to be a director, I want to be a technician, an editor or a cinematographer, because I don't want to spend so much time making one film.' I want to be on different films, different experiences. I feel that I am still discovering who I am and what my voice is, but also I don't really believe in this thing of a filmmaker having just one voice. That's why I admire Stanley Kubrick so much. Each film is a film, there is no filmmaker to be found. Of course you can say at the end of the day, this is a Kubrick film, but he is the finest example of a filmmaker where the film is an entity of its own and there is no one behind it.



You could think while watching Titli that it belongs to a genre that is growing now in Bombay, a kind of social cinema, with a message about the real urban India. Would you say that Titli is a film with a message?

I don't think I was trying to give any message. One of the quotes that I really love is from Kamal Swaroop, who has made a film called Om-Dar-B-Dar. He made a documentary on Pushkar in which he's sitting on a tempo with his two kids and he's travelling on the road. It's a moving shot, and his children ask him 'Papa, where did you find this story?' and he says 'I don't know, beta, maybe it was just laying on the road somewhere and I just picked it up.' That's what I am really enamored by. I don't think I wanted to tell a story, I think the story has found itself, and has managed to come out through this bunch of people who have come together to make this piece.

You'd just think that it's a message film because of the issues it's dealing with – arranged marriages, poverty, violence that comes from that poverty...

What I was really interested in were these ghosts that are within a family. The more I talk to myself, to the script, the more I question things. That's why there's the photograph of the dead grandfather in the house. Who do you blame? Do you blame Titli? Do you blame Vikram? Do you blame the father who is silent? I think it's a mistake to go up to the father and say 'You're the real pig', because he's not. What about the dead grandfather, who's constantly looking around in the house, who's been tended to every morning. The day I got the idea of the dead grandfather's photo was within a week of me discovering R.D. Laing, the psychiatrist, and his book called The Politics of The Family, which he'd written some fifty years ago. Laing says how images are transferred unconsciously from one person to another within the family. And sometimes you don't even meet your dead grandparent, but the parents pass on that image of the dead grandparent on to the grandkids, saying 'you're just like your grandfather' and those ghosts are being passed on.

Could you explain the meaning of the name "Titli"?

Literally 'Titli' means 'Butterfly'. It is one creature that has the most drastic metamorphosis from being a lifeless ugly caterpillar to that of a vibrant beautiful butterfly. The title of the film is quite tongue-in-cheek as the character - Titli's journey is quite the opposite. From being an innocent oppressed boy, eventually turning into an oppressive monster himself. Some of my friends have another theory to choosing a feminine name for a male character. They say it's because I myself have personally been misunderstood to be a woman (Kanu is usually a girl's name in India) so many times, and since this is a very personal film, that I subconsciously chose a woman's name for my male protagonist.



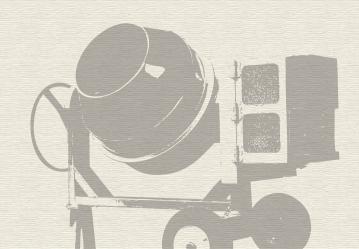


Making of Titli

The commercial industry of Bollywood is usually a world of fantasy made in studios. Nowadays, more and more movies are being made in real locations. The film was made in Delhi, because that's where you come from... Can you tell us more about how the filming went, in a realistic environment, in Delhi?

I think the big decision to shoot it as realistic as possible, and have as many non-actors was because I really wanted to break away from this tradition of falsification. Bollywood is not the kind of cinema that I believe in. I knew this film could only be made with non-actors. The decision to cast Ranvir Shorey, who is the only known actor in the film, was because I think he's a brilliant actor and he has this ability to not want to act at all times. Plus he had a terrific presence for the part which I knew worked. I had written the part for him. The others were discovered along the way. The father in the film by the way is my own father. That was a tricky decision that came in late. I originally didn't want to cast him, for obvious reasons. Titli was an accident, a discovery. He was a struggling actor who just walked in with an audition tape. He's a city boy, we didn't know if he could pull off the part. So we sent him to the place that we wanted him to be in, he lived there for a month and we saw what he had picked up. It was a really long process after which I decided to go with him. Neelu our actress is a complete first actor. Up until ten days before the shoot we didn't have a Neelu. On the shoot, she was the biggest surprise, a born actress. The middle brother was a professional actor. The casting director Atul Mongia, who is also the associate director on the film, and I were completely in sync and we watch the same kind of cinema. He's a north-Indian family Punju [from Punjab] boy, so he knows what the film is, and he's lived the film himself. We knew the kind of cast we wanted for this film. The process evolved very quickly as Siddharth Diwan, (the director of photography) came on to the film, and said 'we'll just let the actors be, work around them'. We shot the film in forty days. It was the peak of summer, it was hot, we were in the worst two months in Delhi, and we were shooting almost sixteen hours a day, everyday. Even though everybody was unhappy, including myself, everyone was really passionat





Can you talk about the locations? Delhi, like Bombay, is a city that is changing fast... And it seems in the film that there are two different kinds of areas, this parking lot which is new to the city as Delhi is extending, and the area where the brothers live...

I've seen Delhi change over the past fifteen years, and it's changed massively. There is construction everywhere now; it's growing like a beast that is almost out of control. The city is really two totally different parts, which is the people who are in the city, who want things, who are consuming, and who want to be served all the time, and the people who are not part of it, who are on the fringe, who are thrown out, and who are entrusted with the job of serving the people who want to be served. Everyday they are being pushed more and more to the fringe. I was trying to understand the violence that we are hearing about, where is it coming from? I think it's really the anger of the people who are constantly pushed to the fringe. It is violence which is born out of extreme frustration, of being pushed to a corner. Siddharth and I wanted these two worlds to find themselves. So it should be a story about this family, but really the spaces should reflect these two worlds. One is the shiny world of the city, where these people are brought in – Vikram is a security guard, he's there to open doors and takes care of this mall, this big beast which is serving people who want to be served. And then there is this other world which is a world that is almost forgotten, which is stuck in time. If you see Titli's house, we were almost trying to evoke the 1990s. If you really go to these places, you feel like they are from another world.

Could you talk about the (crucial) role of women in your film and in the Indian society today. How it has evolved?

Since the advent of Globalization in 1991, the Indian woman has gone beyond the mere role of playing teacher, apparel-boutique-owner and other such, in her life. She is today in every work field, working full-time, sometimes over-time. That has somewhere created ripples in the balance that was being maintained for long in Indian society. Both urban men and women are still trying to deal with this phenomenon, including the so-called intelligentia. Titli was always intended as an anti-patriarchal film. Thus, all the women, even as they are very real, are strong and have an individual voice. Whether it is Neelu, Sangeeta or even the female-lawyer who comes for precisely one scene in the film, these women are thinkers and doers, dictated only by the morals of their own conscience. However, since they neither have physical nor financial power over the men in their lives, they are often finally left to their mercy, making their struggle to escape longer and tougher. But whether its Sangeeta's journey towards freedom from Vikram, or Neelu's evolution to realizing the 'true' Prince and telling Titli towards the end that 'her hand will have a permanent fracture', the film at every point intends to voice their pain in an empathetic – and not sympathetic – way.



Indian cinema today

What was it like working with producers of contrasting oeuvres - a big Bollywood major like YRF and an indie like DBP?

Its like asking which do you prefer - the cake or the icing?

YRF and DBP together, bring around forces for a film - any film - which when put together generate great momentum to move it in the right direction. While an Indie powerhouse like DBP deciding to back Titli helped it retain its integrity, honesty and rigor to see the film to its fullest possible creative extent; the presence of YRF has helped solidify the product of that hard work with its massive infrastructure and distribution/exhibition support behind it.

So for me it was best of both world coming together in a way that benefited the film in all the beautiful aspects that it could.

Your film has just been chosen for Un Certain Regard. How do you feel about being at Cannes? How come Indian cinema is now finally entering the biggest film festival in the world?

It hasn't sunk in completely. Maybe going there and being a part of the experience will make it feel real. It's a very important achievement for the film to go out there and show itself with the best, because a film like this needs that exposure that support. Just going there and being on that platform will help give the film a certain energy and the correct life that it should have, both for an international audience, and more importantly probably for a domestic audience, because it creates a momentum behind it. There are stories here that find a universal voice. We just probably need to tell them the correct way. The credit goes to previous Directors such as Dibakar Banerjee, Anurag Kashyap and other people around them, because they were really the ones to give birth to the wave that is constantly gathering momentum. So the future of Indian cinema is quite bright? I think it's a really exciting time for







DIRECTOR'S BIO

After dabbling in radio, copywriting, acting and theatre, Kanu studied at the Satyajit Ray Film and TV Institute, Kolkata, majoring in Film Direction. His first documentary landed in competition at Cinema du Reel. Next, he directed and produced three more docs for NHK Japan, ZDF and ARTE. In 2007, he dove into fiction as an assistant director to Dibakar Banerjee on the critically acclaimed feature « Oye Lucky Lucky Oye ». In 2010, he co-wrote « Love, Sex aur Dhokha » with Dibakar Banerjee. The film brought him recognition as a voice of note. « Titli » is his first feature as a writer/director.

FILMOGRAPHY

As Director

An Actor Prepares (Doc / 2006 / 23 mins / Produced by SRFTI, India)
Found Him Yet? (Doc / 2007 / 58 mins / Produced by NHK Japan)
Three Blind Men (Doc / 2008 / 7 mins / Produced by STEPS International)

As Producer

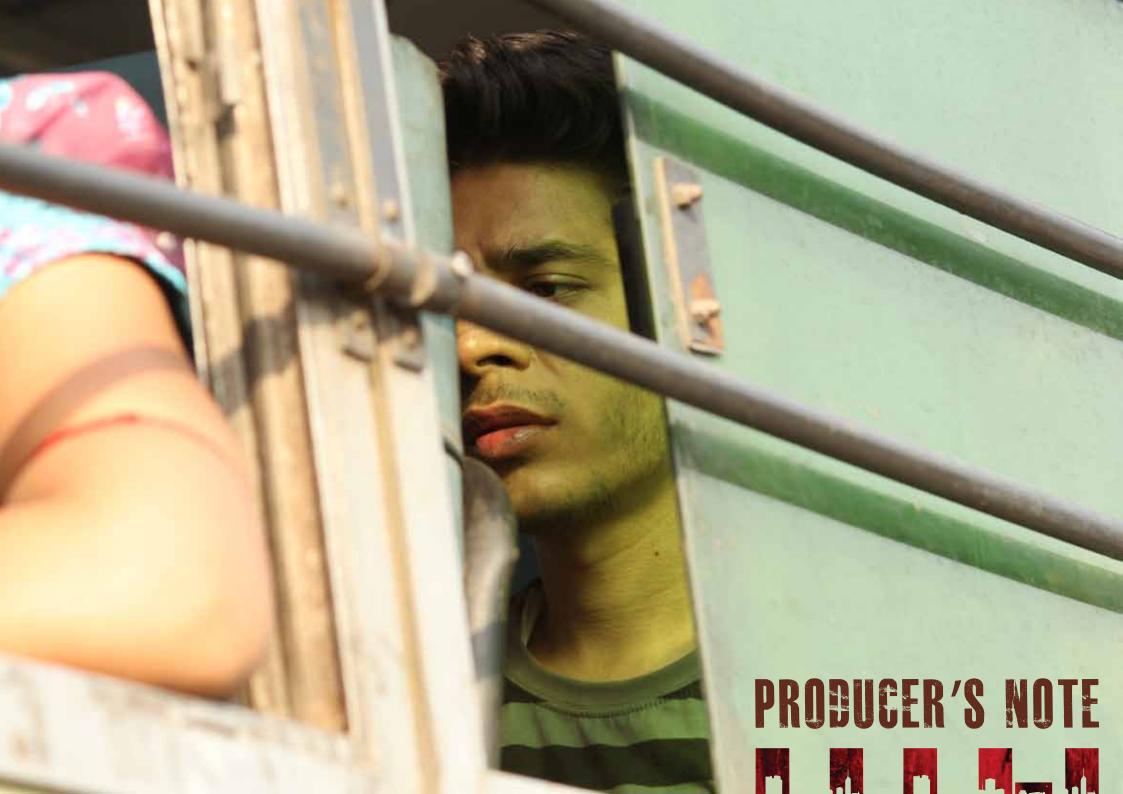
Over Thresholds (Doc / 2009 / 26 mins / Produced by NHK Japan)

As Writer

LSD (Love, Sex & Deception) (Fiction / 2010 / 120 mins / Produced by Alt Ent.)









66DIBAKAR BANERJEE

As a producer I'm interested in giving birth to a film that's difficult to give birth to, because it's the difficult child that does something which history remembers. It's very tough to survive in the commercial or semi-commercial context in the Indian film industry by making films that are dissenting in nature. But that's what I want to do - to make films that rebel, which shake up, provoke and turn a very hard light into the dark spaces of our society. Titli meets that criterion quite well. Titli has raw & searing honesty - something deeply truthful that caught me instantly. Many first time filmmakers on their 1st film want to tickle the audience's balls, they do something and get by. Kanu decided not to get by. He decided that he' d rather have this obscure film seen by 3 people, rather than try and be many things to many people. That militancy of sticking to his demons is what has made this one of the most fascinating debut films of Indian cinema in a long-long time.



I am interested in Indian cinema being recognized as Indian cinema as away and separate from Bollywood, which is just a sub-genre. To have a sub-genre take away the entity of an entire society is extremely damaging. While Bollywood is essential - A film like this wouldn't have been produced if India did not have a thriving commercially successful industry, which many countries have lost because of the onslaught of Hollywood. The flip side is, as an art form, we have become quite damaged. My dream is to create Indian cinema, which is away from Bollywood, and yet it is truly Indian.

As we go away and make this big thing of independent cinema in India, sometimes we fall into a trap of trying to pander to the western audience, and try and do some monkey tricks to get noticed. Titli is a film which is completely devoid of such monkey tricks. Titli is a film that comes from its own reason to be.

Titli is made to shock the Indian audience into waking up and showing what goes on amongst our lives. It's made for all the world cinema audience, who'd love to peep into another culture and find the same ingredients of humanity. Titli is immensely rooted and at the same time it is immensely universal, as it talks about a family, and I don't think there is any human being on this planet who doesn't understand what a family is.







Dibakar Banerjee's Filmography

As Producer-Director

LSD (Love, Sex & Deception, 2010)

Shanghai (2012)

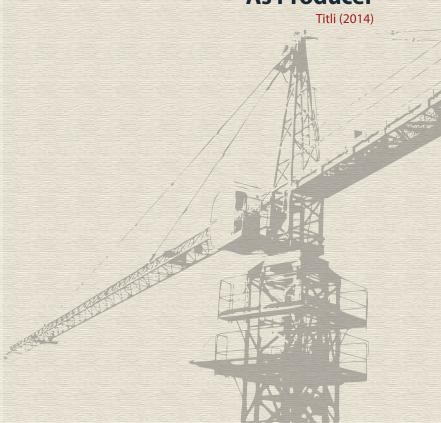
Bombay Talkies (Star) (2013)

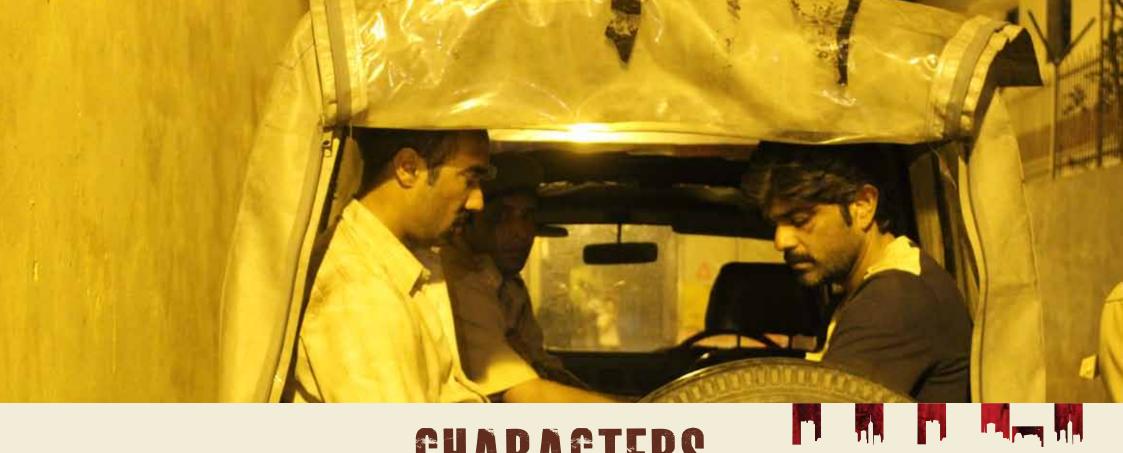
Detective Byomkesh Bakshy (in post-production)

As Director

Khosla Ka Ghosla (The House Khosla Built, 2006) Oye Lucky Lucky Oye (Yo Lucky!, 2008)

As Producer





CHARACTERS





TITLI

Titli is the youngest of the three brothers who hopes to run away from the oppression of his eldest brother Vikram and to escape the daily problems that come from sharing burdens in a family. His dream is cut short when his money is stolen and he's married off to Neelu. In his fanaticism to escape, he gradually turns into the same oppressor that he once hated the most.



SHASHANK ARORA

Born and brought up in New Delhi, Shashank studie cinema and music in Montreal, Canada before moving to Mumbai to do a two-year acting course. After completing the course, he's been assisting Casting Director Seher Latif. Titli is his debut feature.





SHIVANI RAGHUVANSHI

Born and brought up in New Delhi, Shivani comleted her graduation from SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University. With no prior acting experience or training, Titli is her debut feature.



NEELU

Neelu is a lower middle class girl with aspirations much higher than the class she hails from. To her consternation, she's married off to Titli, whose family belongs to the same class as hers. Her confidence and demeanor is a threat to the patriarchal roots that define this family of four men. She's a survivor who won't let any obstacle weigh her down.





VIKRAM

Vikram, the oldest son and current patriarch is a reckless, emotional fool who's very rigid in his thoughts and processes and believes he knows best for everyone in his family and thus is the sole decision maker. The years of oppression have taken a toll on him and he hardly ever smiles. His hard line policies wreak havoc over everyone in the family.



RANVIR SHOREY

Ranvir Shorey has been acting passionately both on stage and on screen. Since 2002 he has essayed various characters in over 40 films. He lives in Mumbai with his actress wife Konkona Sen Sharma and son Haroon





AMIT SIAL

Hailing from Kanpur, North India, Amit left his training as a business graduate to focus on acting on stage and never looked back. In the last 20 years he has acted in various stage productions and films. He has also produced an indie feature in 2013.



BAAWLA/PRADEEP

Baawla, the middle brother is the woman of the house. He's the mediator who keeps the family together. By deliberately putting himself below Vikram, he knows how to steer Vikram into doing what he himself thinks is right for the family. He is the only son who can see through Daddy's subtle power manipulations.





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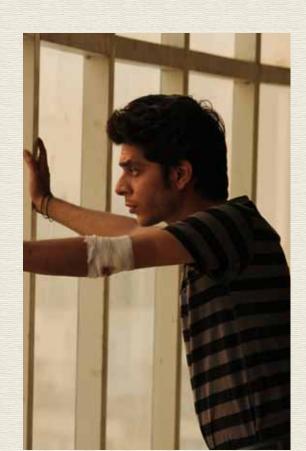
A gold medalist from Department of Indian Theatre, Punjab University, renowned Actor / Writer / Producer / Director Lalit Behl has been working in theatre, television and cinema since the past four decades. He is based in New Delhi with his actor / teacher / writer wife, Navnindra Behl.





Once the patriarch, now past his prime, Daddy seemingly remains relegated to the mercy of his older son, Vikram, the current patriarch of the family. However Daddy still has unspoken influence over Vikram and is subtly manipulative. The sons, except Baawla, remain oblivious to the invisible strings that he often pulls









DIBAKAR BANERJEE / DBP

In a Bollywood which till a decade ago was largely driven by tried-and-tested song and dance formulae, simplistic mass fare and the star-cult, Dibakar Banerjee has become widely recognised as one of those who changed its course. Over eight years and five landmark films Banerjee has emerged as one of India's most original directors —a poster boy for the so-called Indie movement, though a better formulation for his work might be personal cinema. Some of the most celebrated commercial and critical milestones of contemporary Indian cinema have DBP and Dibakar Banerjee as the force behind them. His debut feauture Khosla Ka Ghosla (The House Khosla Built, 2006) was a sleeper hit without any known stars, introducing new talent that soon became ndustry staples redefining the genre of independent cinema in India and creating a new trend with many followers and imitators. His next Oye Lucky Lucky Oye (Yo Lucky!, 2008) remains till date the most celebrated savage indictment of the same modern Indian middle class that was idealised in the first film. Love Sex Aur Dhokha (Love Sex & Deception, 2010), a triptych of three stories that are connected flowing back and forth of time, was the first commercially successful, breakthrough digital film in India, widely considered as seminal work in Indian cinema for challenging the rules of camera and plot structure. Shanghai (2012) was a retelling of Vasili Vasillikos's Z, going to the novel for its roots and remains a punch-in-the-gut commentary about a country trying to emulate the First World while pretending that its poor don't exist. It has been hailed as a film that transcends cultural and stylistic barriers and is ready for a world audience exactly as it is, and also as one of the most thought-provoking and powerful films of 2012. A self-confessed recluse who avoids the public glare, Banerjee's lens is known for its searing expose of the chaotic culture-scape of new India. His grasp on the essentials is acute & unsentimental. His films are clear-sighted about social hierarchies, and insightful about the hegemony of the privileged over the powerless, while in their telling, cynicism is often layered generously with humour, the humour layered with love, and so on until the circuit closes. Continuing the tradition, Titli becomes the first film in the "DBP Debut" series of productions that will select the most promising Indian debutante director and bring his/her unique and fresh vision to screen, showcasing original Indian stories and storytellers.

Contact: titli@dbpindia.com & info@dbpindia.com

Website: www.dbpindia.com







GREW

Yash Raj Films Presents
A DBP Production

Director Kanu Behl
Producer Dibakar Banerjee
Written by Sharat Katariya & Kanu Behl
Executive Producer Smriti Jain
Director of Photography Siddharth Diwan
Production Designer Parul Sondh
Editor Namrata Rao
Sound Designer Pritam Das
Associate Director & Casting Atul Mongia
Make-up design Serena Tixiera
Costume Designer Fabeha Khan
First assistant director Namrata Majumdar
Continuity Supervisor Rohit Sharma
International Sales Westend Films
US Sales XYZ Films

Consultant - International sales & marketing Sikhya Entertainment



